

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated November 15, 2005 has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

Claim 6 is hereby amended; claims 21-22 are hereby withdrawn. Accordingly, claims 1-20 are currently pending. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 6 and 7 are rejected under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) for being in improper dependent form. Applicants amend claim 1 to overcome this rejection. The withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 6-14, 19, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003-0205333 to Hayafuji et al. Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 2000-284295 to Satoshi et al. in view of U.S. Patent 6,092,578 to Machida et al. and 3,769,132 to Cram et al. Claims 16-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi and Machida in view of U.S. Patent 5,324,053 to Kubota.

The rejection of claim 1-20 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Claims 1-20 are allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recites a combination of elements including, for example, “an upper stage fixed to the upper chamber unit for securing a first substrate; a lower stage fixed to the lower chamber unit for securing a second substrate; and a plurality of elastic members arranged between the upper and lower chamber units and the upper and lower stages” as recited in claim 1. None of the cited references including Hayafuji, Satoshi, Machida, Kubota, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention.

The structure of claim 1 of the present invention is different from the Hayafuji structure in that Hayafuji does not disclose or suggest an upper stage fixed to the upper chamber unit for securing a first substrate; a lower stage fixed to the lower chamber unit for securing a second substrate". The Examiner alleges that elements 21 and 12 are the upper stage and upper chamber units respectively, however Hayafuji discloses that element 21 is the frame body (para. [0042] and that element 12 is the top lid (para. [0041]). In addition, as the Examiner acknowledges, neither Satoshi nor Machida teach or suggest "elastic members arranged between the upper and lower chamber units and the upper and lower stages" as recited in claim 1. The Examiner alleges that adding elastic members would be obvious, however this is impermissible hindsight. The only suggestion to add the elastic members is Applicants' own invention, because none of the cited references teach or suggest any combination of "an upper stage fixed to the upper chamber unit for securing a first substrate; a lower stage fixed to the lower chamber unit for securing a second substrate; and a plurality of elastic members arranged between the upper and lower chamber units and the upper and lower stages". Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 and claims 2-20, which depend from claim 1, are allowable over the cited references.

Applicants believe the foregoing amendments place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the

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filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments